

Story #425 (Tape #1, 1968)

Narrator: Ramazan Demircan

Location: Cingirli (village of im-  
migrants from Southern  
Russia, Crimean Tatars  
who speak Tatar dialect  
as well as Turkish)  
Kaza of Haymana, Province  
of Ankara

Date: 1968

Yahya, the Abused Crimean Bridegroom

First I shall start with a short tale to warm up. Later I shall tell a longer one. Should I speak to this microphone?

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In 1935 I was called up for military service. I had a good friend in my company who was called Yahya, and he was from the Russian Crimea. He had become the <sup>Internal Bridegroom</sup> "internal son-in-law" of a wealthy man in the Crimea. He lived at his father-in-law's home for three months, but then he was called up for duty. He deserted, however, and then escaped to Turkey. He often used to tell me the adventures he had had in his life.

The fellow used to stretch himself out on the dining room table of the company after the evening meal and lie there crying. We used to try to console him, saying, "Friend, why are you crying? Something must have happened to you. What is it?"

<sup>1</sup>The "internal son-in-law" or "internal bridegroom" is a newly-wed man too poor, or without sufficient support from his own family, to establish a home of his own for his bride and himself. He lives with his wife's people instead of with his own. Such an unfortunate person is looked down upon, pitied, or scorned. He has lost social status.

He finally told us what his problem was and about all of the adventures he had had in his life. After that, each time we asked him about it, he retold to us the whole account.<sup>2</sup>

He told us, "When I was in the Crimea, before being called up for military service, I was married to a girl there. I was the "internal bridegroom" in the home of a wealthy businessman. But three months after the wedding, my rudder was broken.<sup>3</sup> My family life was completely destroyed, and I later came to Turkey. I was hired as a farm hand by an ağa in the village of Ihsaniye, in the kaza of Çifteler, in the Province of Eskişehir. I was called up for my military service in 1935, and my unit was the First Signal Regiment. While doing my duty in that regiment, I often remembered my past adventures and wept about them. My friends often asked me to tell them about these adventures, and I used to feel compelled to repeat them."

Well, as already mentioned, this man worked as a farm laborer in that village. The ağa had a son named Müsref to whom another ağa, in a neighboring village, wished to give his daughter. Before long the wedding took place, and the young man went to live as bridegroom in his wife's village. After a matter of two or three months, they returned to his village<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>There is obvious repetition in this tale and also some confusion on the part of the narrator. This is a literal transcript, however, not an edited version.

<sup>3</sup>This is a figurative expression to indicate that one's affairs met with disaster.

<sup>4</sup>This is the point at which the confusion cannot be disentangled. The tale moves completely to first-person narration and ceases to be a story which the narrator is repeating as something he had been told by his friend Yahya. Further to confuse the tale, the troubled youth (who as soldier repeated his woes) seems to be back in the Crimean village, not Ihsaniye. Two sources of confusion: 1) Who is the narrator? 2) At what point in the past is a given episode occurring?

Close to Kurban Bayram<sup>5</sup> I went home to get two cartloads of wheat to take to a city (the name of which I have forgotten) to sell. My father-in-law called me to him and said, "Take two cartloads of wheat to the city. Sell it, and with the money buy things for your wife and for your sister-in-law. Also, buy a suit of clothes for yourself."

I was rather embarrassed by this, for, as I told him, I already had a suit. "You bought me one only just the other day. I don't want to spend your money on another suit." I thought that this would please him.

But the ağa insisted, "This village is such a village that you had better take my advice and buy yourself a suit."

I sold the wheat and started home. Along the way a horse cart stopped in front of me. The driver shouted, "Yahya, stop! Yahya, stop!" I called to my driver to stop.

In the horse cart there was a woman and a girl of about eighteen, and the girl, jumping down, came to my cart. "What an ungrateful young man you are!" she said, half jokingly. "You used to be in my village some time ago, and we had a lot of fun together. You promised to marry me, but now you have taken my elder brother's daughter as wife. You forgot all about me. Now pay this driver [her driver] five liras."

I paid the driver the five liras, and he went his way. The girl then climbed up on my cart, and we came together to the home of my ağa. My father-in-law and his son-in-law [?] embraced the girl and took her

<sup>5</sup>Kurban Bayram means Sacrifice Holiday, a religious festival of several days' duration, about 10 weeks after the end of Ramazan, when sheep are slaughtered in ritual sacrifice and most of their meat given to the poor.

in as their guest. There were many people there that day.

A few hours later there was to be a circumcision ceremony in the village, and we were all invited to attend. The women were all gathered in one house, and the male members of the community were in another. We remained there for a while, and after a while we left.

After we came home, my wife began kneading dough for bread, and the visiting girl was also in the house. When I was about to go to my mother-in-law's quarters to borrow a knife, I stopped before a mirror to make myself look neat. The girl came up behind me and made signs from behind. I wondered what she meant by these signs, and so I turned around and looked at her. "What a shameless fellow you are," she said. "You kept promising me you would marry me. You played with me, but now you have married my elder sister and become my brother-in-law.<sup>6</sup> This means that you have abandoned me."

I said, "Oh, leave that out of your talk. It is a thing of the past

She said, "Even if you have given me up, I have not given you up." Saying this, she put her arms around my neck. When I tried to push her away, we fell, and I happened to land on top of her. Right at that moment my wife came into the room.

"Oh, what a thing they are doing!"<sup>7</sup> she said. Then she ran to her

<sup>6</sup>In her earlier accusation, she had said he had married her elder brother's daughter, who would have been her niece.

*Accusation false*

<sup>7</sup>Literally, the Turkish comment was "Look at the mint they are eating!" nane yemek means to eat mint, but this is a common figurative expression meaning to commit a blunder. The Turkish expression used here was vediyin naneya bak.

father's quarters and reported this to him. Many men with sticks in their hands came to where I was and beat me, cursed me, and drove me away. I had forty golden liras left from the sale of the wheat, and since they did not ask me for this money, I took it with me when I left the village. In this manner I was thrown out of my home

As I traveled, I came to a ruined mill. There appeared there forty horsemen, who were bandits, and they intended to rob me. I begged one of them not to rob me, and he showed me some pity, ordering the others, "Give him his money back." Then, to me, he said, "Where do you want to go?"

"If it is possible, I want to go to Turkey," I said

They told me how to reach the border, and so I crossed into Turkey, and now I am a soldier here. Before long, about three months, I had a letter from my family, saying, "We are very sorry for what we did to you. We have now discovered the truth. If it is possible, return here."<sup>8</sup>

I told this to my commanding officer, and he took down a telegram from my mouth to the other side. Just before the end of my service, my commanding officer sent me home by ship.

<sup>8</sup>How could either the narrator or Yahya have returned to the Crimea but still be there? It sounds as if the narrator had heard the tale in both first- and third-person narration and has here mixed the two.